

**Preliminary Amendment filed December 6, 2005
U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/893,522**

REMARKS:

Claims 1-34 are currently pending. Claims 1-4, 7, 8, 15, 16, and 23-28 are currently being considered, of which claims 3 and 4 have been amended herein and claims 29-34 have been newly added herein. Claims 5, 6, 9-14, and 17-22 have been withdrawn from consideration.

Applicants and Applicants' attorney thank Examiner Fox for the interview courteously granted. The special attention the Examiner paid to the instant application is noted with appreciation. Items discussed during the interview include: claims as filed April 25, 2005; and the Office Action dated July 6, 2005.

Claims 3 and 16/3 stand rejected under 35 USC 102(e) as anticipated by USP 6,502,601 (**Eidsmore**).

Claims 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 15, and 16/1 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as obvious over USP 6,394,138 (**Vu**) in view of USP 6,076,543 (**Johnson**).

Claims 23-28 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as obvious over **Vu** in view of **Johnson** and USP 6,231,260 (**Markulec**).

Applicants respectfully traverse all of the above rejections.

Preliminary Amendment filed December 6, 2005
U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/893,522

A.

The Examiner has suggested that **Vu** shows all features of claims 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 15, and 16/1 “except for the mounting of the fluid components on rails”.

Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner.

Vu fails to describe, teach, or suggest at least the following features set forth in claims 1, 2, and 4: “the plurality of lines being arranged in parallel on a base member and having inlets directed in the same direction, with outlets thereof facing toward the same direction”, in combination with the other claimed features.

Vu shows only one line, and, furthermore, that one line has an inlet (fitting 244) that is in a direction orthogonal to the outlet (fitting 264) (see figs. 11-13). We propose to argue that the arrangement of fittings 244,264 would make it cumbersome to place a plurality of similarly-configured lines in parallel.

Thus, **Vu** fails to describe, teach, or suggest the following features set forth in claims 1, 2, and 4: “the plurality of lines being arranged in parallel on a base member and having inlets directed in the same direction, with outlets thereof facing toward the same direction”, in combination with

the other claimed features.

In view of the above, the Examiner's description of a combination of the teachings of **Vu** and **Johnson** would not cause one of ordinary skill in the art to arrive at the above-described features of claims 1, 2, and 4.

Vu and **Johnson**, alone or in combination, fail to describe, teach, or suggest the following features of claims 1, 2, and 4: "the plurality of lines being arranged in parallel on a base member and having inlets directed in the same direction, with outlets thereof facing toward the same direction", in combination with the other claimed features.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of claims 1, 2, and 4, and the rejections of all claims depending therefrom, should be withdrawn.

B.

Applicants respectfully submit that **Eidsmore** fails to describe, teach, or suggest the following features set forth in claim 3, as amended: "two of the coupling members are not directly connected to each other so that each coupling member can be fixed at any position of the track independently, and each coupling member has vertical internally threaded portions formed in the

Preliminary Amendment filed December 6, 2005
U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/893,522

upper wall and each of the fluid controllers is attached to two of the coupling members by driving screws inserted through the controller into the internally threaded portion of the coupling member", in combination with the other claimed features.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of claims 3 and 16/3 should be withdrawn.

C.

Applicants respectfully submit that **Vu, Johnson, and Markulec**, alone or in combination, fail to describe, teach, or suggest the following features set forth in claim 4, as amended: "two of the coupling members are not directly connected to each other so that each coupling member can be fixed at any position of the track independently, and each coupling member has vertical internally threaded portions formed in the upper wall and each of the fluid controllers is attached to two of the coupling members by driving screws inserted through the controller into the internally threaded portion of the coupling member", in combination with the other claimed features.

D.

Applicants respectfully submit that **Eidsmore, Vu, Johnson, and Markulec**, alone or in combination, fail to describe, teach, or suggest the following features set forth in newly added claim 29: "wherein a plurality of lines comprise a spare line and only a line supporting rail is provided for the spare line", in combination with the other claimed features.

Applicants respectfully submit that **Eidsmore, Vu, Johnson, and Markulec**, alone or in combination, fail to describe, teach, or suggest the following features set forth in newly added claim 30: "wherein the device is assembled by attaching each line supporting rail having coupling members and fluid controllers mounted thereon to the base member", in combination with the other claimed features.

Applicants respectfully submit that **Eidsmore, Vu, Johnson, and Markulec**, alone or in combination, fail to describe, teach, or suggest the following features set forth in newly added claim 31: "wherein lines are modified by removing channel connecting means upward as required, then removing the old line to be modified as mounted on the line supporting rail, slidably moving the line supporting rails of the lines not to be modified when so required, mounting on the base member the line supporting rail of the line to be substituted, further slidably returning the line supporting rails of the lines not to be modified to the proper position, and finally installing channel connecting

Preliminary Amendment filed December 6, 2005
U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/893,522

means as required for modification", in combination with the other claimed features.

Applicants respectfully submit that **Eidsmore, Vu, Johnson, and Markulec**, alone or in combination, fail to describe, teach, or suggest the following features set forth in newly added claim 32: "wherein lines are installed by removing channel connecting means upward as required, slidably moving the line supporting rails of the existing lines as required, mounting on the base member the line supporting rail of the line to be added, further slidably returning the line supporting rails of the existing lines to the proper position, and finally installing channel connecting means as required for addition", in combination with the other claimed features.

Applicants respectfully submit that **Eidsmore, Vu, Johnson, and Markulec**, alone or in combination, fail to describe, teach, or suggest the following features set forth in newly added claim 33: "wherein the fluid controller can be replaced by one having a different length by removing the fluid controller to be replaced, moving the coupling member along the line supporting rail to the required position, fixing the coupling member to the line supporting rail, and mounting the substitute fluid controller on the coupling members concerned.", in combination with the other claimed features.

Applicants respectfully submit that **Eidsmore, Vu, Johnson, and Markulec**, alone or in combination, fail to describe, teach, or suggest the following features set forth in newly added claim

Preliminary Amendment filed December 6, 2005
U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/893,522

34: "wherein an additional fluid controller and an additional coupling member can be installed in the existing line by removing a fluid controller adjacent to the additional fluid controller, moving the coupling member adjacent to the additional coupling member along the line supporting rail to the required position, fixing the additional coupling member to the line supporting rail, and mounting the additional fluid controller on the coupling members concerned", in combination with the other claimed features.

In view of the aforementioned remarks and amendments, it is respectfully submitted that all claims currently being considered are in condition for allowance, which action, at an early date, is respectfully requested.

If, for any reason, it is felt that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the Applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this case.

Preliminary Amendment filed December 6, 2005
U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/893,522

In the event that this paper is not timely filed, the Applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. Please charge any fees for such an extension of time and any other fees which may be due with respect to this paper, to Deposit Account No. 01-2340.

Respectfully submitted,

ARMSTRONG, KRATZ, QUINTOS,
HANSON & BROOKS, LLP



Darren R. Crew
Attorney for Applicants
Reg. No. 37,806

DRC/llf
Atty. Docket No. **010846**
Suite 1000
1725 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 659-2930



23850

PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE

Enclosures: Petition for Extension of Time